

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2018

The Honorable Ralph DLG Torres
Governor
Commonwealth of the
Northern Mariana Islands
Caller Box 10007
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Torres:

Thank you for your letter of July 21, reporting that the Commonwealth has applied for a Fiscal Year 2018 State Trade Expansion Program grant. We are fortunate that the STEP office at the Small Business Administration brought to my attention that the Commonwealth and some other states had not applied and that the application window would be briefly re-opened. Congratulations on your administration's quick response, when I informed you of this opportunity.

Your congressional office confirmed today with the STEP office that your application has been received. It is complete. And agency readers are evaluating and scoring your proposal today.

I understand that the agency is required to make awards by the end of September, but announcement in the latter part of August is possible.

You may be interested to know that almost 50 states and territories have now applied and subscriptions are in the \$24 million range. Congress has provided \$18 million for fiscal 2018. The agency has made a priority, however, of increased participation. It would be consistent with that goal to award a grant to every applicant, who meets the program requirements.

Thank you, again, for keeping me informed. I look forward to continuing to work with you to build economic opportunity in the Marianas.

Sincerely,



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress

cc: Mr. Frank Cabrera

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RALPH DLG. TORRES
Governor



VICTOR B. HOCOG
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH of the NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

July 21, 2018

The Honorable Gregorio Kilili Sablan
Congressman
United States House of Representatives
2411 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Sablan:

The CNMI is a recipient of the 2017 Two-Year State Trade Expansion Program (STEP). Working in partnership with the Small Business Administration and the Commonwealth Development Authority, the CNMI STEP Team has successfully recruited eligible small businesses from the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota. While the CNMI is only in its third quarter into the STEP program, training initiatives are underway to provide participating ESBCs the essentials of operating a successful export business venture.

To increase the number of ESBC participants, the CNMI STEP Team is actively promoting the program through outreach initiatives throughout the Commonwealth. Mr. Frank Cabrera's appearance at the Rotary Club meeting is part of that initiative to promote export commerce to small businesses.

The successful submission of the CNMI's application for the Fiscal Year 2018 STEP Grant opportunity demonstrates the commitment of this Administration to expanding the program in order to afford more small businesses to participate. I remain optimistic that the CNMI's probability of being awarded additional funding to cultivate this important program in the Commonwealth would continue to receive the support of our Congressional office.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. It is the policy of this Administration to support opportunities that would continue to expand economic development, as well as programs that foster entrepreneurship and building the Commonwealth's workforce capacity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ralph DLG. Torres'.

RALPH DLG. TORRES
Governor